UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/49/622
10 November 1994
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

Forty-ninth session
Agenda item 80

QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION

Report of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Rapporteur: Mr. Dieudonné NDIAYE (Gabon)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its 3rd plenary meeting, on 23 September 1994, the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided to include in the agenda of its forty-ninth session the item entitled "Questions relating to information" and to allocate it to the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee).

2. The Fourth Committee considered the item at its 10th to 12th and 14th meetings, from 26 to 28 and on 31 October 1994 (see A/C.4/49/SR.10-12 and 14).

3. The Fourth Committee had before it the following documents:

(a) Report of the Committee on Information; 1/

(b) Report of the Secretary-General (A/49/385).

4. At the 10th meeting, on 26 October, the representative of Ireland, the Rapporteur of the Committee on Information, introduced the report of the Committee and the draft proposals contained therein. 2/

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/49/21).

2/ Ibid., paras. 61 and 62.

5. At the same meeting, the Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information made an introductory statement on the activities of the Department of Public Information.

6. At the 14th meeting, on 31 October, the Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information made a concluding statement.

II. CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT RESOLUTIONS A AND B AND THE DRAFT DECISION CONTAINED IN PARAGRAPHS 61 AND 62 OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION 1/

7. At the 10th meeting, on 26 October, in the course of his statement, the representative of Ireland proposed an oral amendment to the draft decision contained in paragraph 62 of the report of the Committee on Information, whereby South Africa would be added to the list of States appointed to membership of the Committee on Information.

8. At its 14th meeting, on 31 October, the Fourth Committee adopted without objection the oral amendment proposed by the representative of Ireland.

9. At the same meeting, on the proposal of the Chairman, the Committee decided, by general agreement, to consider and take a decision at one and the same time on the three draft proposals before it relating to the item.

10. At its 14th meeting, the Committee adopted, without a vote, draft resolutions A and B and the draft decision, as orally amended, contained in paragraphs 61 and 62 of the Report of the Committee on Information 1/ (see paras. 11 and 12).

III. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SPECIAL POLITICAL AND DECOLONIZATION COMMITTEE (FOURTH COMMITTEE)

11. The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolutions:

DRAFT RESOLUTION I

Information in service of humanity

The General Assembly,

Taking note of the comprehensive and important report of the Committee on Information, 3/

3/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/49/21).

Also taking note of the report of the Secretary-General on questions relating to information, 4/

Urges all countries, organizations of the United Nations system as a whole and all others concerned, reaffirming their commitment to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and to the principles of freedom of the press and freedom of information, as well as to those of the independence, pluralism and diversity of the media, deeply concerned by the disparities existing between developed and developing countries and the consequences of every kind arising from those disparities that affect the capability of the public, private or other media and individuals in developing countries to disseminate information and communicate their views and their cultural and ethical values through endogenous cultural production, as well as to ensure the diversity of sources and their free access to information, and recognizing the call in this context for what in the United Nations and at various international forums has been termed "a new world information and communication order, seen as an evolving and continuous process":

(a) To cooperate and interact with a view to reducing existing disparities in information flows at all levels by increasing assistance for the development of communication infrastructures and capabilities in developing countries, with due regard for their needs and the priorities attached to such areas by those countries, and in order to enable them and the public, private or other media in developing countries to develop their own information and communication policies freely and independently and increase the participation of media and individuals in the communication process, and to ensure a free flow of information at all levels;

(b) To ensure for journalists the free and effective performance of their professional tasks and condemn resolutely all attacks against them;

(c) To provide support for the continuation and strengthening of practical training programmes for broadcasters and journalists from public, private and other media in developing countries;

(d) To enhance regional efforts and cooperation among developing countries, as well as cooperation between developed and developing countries, to strengthen communication capacities and to improve the media infrastructure and communication technology in the developing countries, especially in the areas of training and dissemination of information;

(e) To aim, in addition to bilateral cooperation, at providing all possible support and assistance to the developing countries and their media, public, private or other, with due regard to their interests and needs in the field of information and to action already adopted within the United Nations system, including:

(i) The development of the human and technical resources that are indispensable for the improvement of information and communication

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4/ A/49/385.

systems in developing countries and support for the continuation and strengthening of practical training programmes, such as those already operating under both public and private auspices throughout the developing world;

(ii) The creation of conditions that will enable developing countries and their media, public, private or other, to have, by using their national and regional resources, the communication technology suited to their national needs, as well as the necessary programme material, especially for radio and television broadcasting;

(iii) Assistance in establishing and promoting telecommunication links at the subregional, regional and interregional levels, especially among developing countries;

(iv) The facilitation, as appropriate, of access by the developing countries to advanced communication technology available on the open market;

(f) To provide full support for the International Programme for the Development of Communication 5/ of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, which should support both public and private media.

DRAFT RESOLUTION II

United Nations public information policies and activities

The General Assembly,

Reaffirming its primary role in elaborating, coordinating and harmonizing United Nations policies and activities in the field of information,

Also reaffirming that the Secretary-General should ensure that the activities of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat, as the focal point of the public information tasks of the United Nations, are strengthened and improved, keeping in view the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the priority areas defined by the General Assembly and the recommendations of the Committee on Information,

Taking note of all reports of the Secretary-General submitted to the Committee on Information,

1. Decides to consolidate the role of the Committee on Information as its main body mandated to make recommendations relating to the work of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat;

5/ See United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Records of the General Conference, Twenty-first Session, vol. I, Resolutions, sect. III.4, resolution 4/21.

2. Calls upon the Secretary-General, in respect of the United Nations public information policies and activities, to implement fully the recommendations contained in paragraph 2 of resolution 48/44 B of 10 December 1993;

3. Decides, however, following the establishment of a united, non-racial and democratic South Africa, to discontinue United Nations information efforts in support of the eradication of apartheid;

4. Notes with appreciation the valuable contribution of the Department of Public Information in support of the eradication of apartheid;

5. Takes note of the report of the Secretary-General regarding the continuous and major publications of the Department of Public Information 6/ and urges all efforts to ensure timely production and dissemination of its major publications, in particular the UN Chronicle, the Yearbook of the United Nations and Africa Recovery, maintaining consistent editorial independence and accuracy, and taking the necessary measures to ensure that its output contains adequate, objective and equitable information about issues before the Organization, reflecting divergent opinions wherever they occur;

6. Also takes note of the report of the Secretary-General on the status of Development Forum, 7/ and encourages the Joint United Nations Information Committee to continue its consideration of the matter;

7. Requests the management of the Department of Public Information to review the Department's publications and proposals for publications to ensure that all publications fulfil an identifiable need, that they do not duplicate other publications inside or outside the United Nations system and that they are produced in a cost-effective manner, and report thereon to the Committee on Information at its seventeenth session;

8. Reaffirms the importance attached by Member States to the role of United Nations information centres in effectively and comprehensively disseminating information, particularly in developing countries and countries in transition, about United Nations activities;

9. Takes note of the report of the Secretary-General on the results of the trial of integrating United Nations information centres with field offices of the United Nations Development Programme, 8/ and invites the Secretary-General to continue the integration exercise whenever feasible, on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the views of the host country, while ensuring that the information functions of the United Nations information centres are not adversely affected, and to report thereon to the Committee on Information;

6/ A/AC.198/1993/5.

7/ A/AC.198/1994/3.

8/ A/AC.198/1994/5.

10. Reaffirms the role of the General Assembly in relation to the opening of new United Nations information centres, and invites the Secretary-General, as well, to make such recommendations as he may judge necessary regarding the establishment and location of these centres;

11. Takes note of the report of the Secretary-General regarding the allocation of resources to United Nations information centres in 1993 9/ and calls upon him to continue to study ways and means to rationalize and effect equitable disbursement of available resources to all United Nations information centres and report thereon to the Committee on Information at its seventeenth session;

12. Welcomes the action by some Member States with regard to financial and material support to United Nations information centres in their respective capitals;

13. Notes the progress made towards finalizing arrangements for a United Nations information component at Warsaw, and requests the Secretary-General to continue, within existing resources of the Department of Public Information, preparations with the Government of Poland to this end;

14. Notes also the progress made by the Secretary-General and the German authorities towards establishing, within existing resources of the Department of Public Information, a United Nations information centre at Bonn;

15. Notes with appreciation the action taken, or being taken, by the Secretary-General regarding the establishment, reactivation and enhancement of the United Nations information centres at Sana'a, Bujumbura, Dar es Salaam and Dhaka;

16. Notes the action being taken by the Secretary-General regarding the reactivation of the United Nations information centre at Tehran, and calls upon the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its seventeenth substantive session on the full reactivation of that information centre;

17. Welcomes the continued enhanced cooperation between the Department of Public Information and the University for Peace in Costa Rica as a focal point for promoting United Nations activities and disseminating United Nations information materials;

18. Takes note of the requests of Bulgaria, Costa Rica, Gabon, Guinea, Haiti and Slovakia for information centres or information components;

19. Expresses its full support for the wide and prompt coverage of United Nations activities through a continuation of United Nations press releases in both working languages of the Secretariat;

9/ A/AC.198/1994/6.

20. Encourages the Secretary-General to explore ways and means to improve the access of United Nations Radio to airwaves worldwide, bearing in mind that radio is one of the most cost-effective and far-reaching media available to the Department of Public Information;

21. Takes note of the recommendations and observations by Member States contained in the report of the Secretary-General 10/ and invites Member States that wish to do so to submit their observations and suggestions to the Secretary-General by 1 February 1995 on ways and means of furthering the development of communication infrastructures and capabilities in developing countries, with a view to consolidating recent experience in the field of international cooperation aimed at enabling them to develop their own information and communication capacities freely and independently, and requests the Secretary-General to report thereon to the Committee on Information at its seventeenth session;

22. Recommends, in order to facilitate continued contact between the Department of Public Information and the Committee on Information between sessions, that the Bureau of the Committee on Information, together with representatives of each regional group, the Group of 77 and China, in close contact with members of the Committee, should meet, as required, and consult at periodic intervals with representatives of the Department;

23. Takes note of the request by Belarus and Ukraine to consider the development and implementation of a system-wide programme for the tenth anniversary in 1996 of the Chernobyl disaster;

24. Requests the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its seventeenth session, in 1995, and to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session, in 1995, on the activities of the Department of Public Information and on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the present resolution;

25. Decides that the next session of the Committee on Information should last ten working days, and invites the Bureau of the Committee to explore ways and means of making optimum use of the Committee's time;

26. Requests the Committee on Information to report to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session;

27. Decides to include in the provisional agenda of its fiftieth session the item entitled "Questions relating to information".

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12. The Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) also recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft decision:

10/ A/AC.198/1994/8.

DRAFT DECISION

Increase in the membership of the Committee on Information

The General Assembly decides to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 83 to 88 members and decides to appoint Belize, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Kazakhstan and South Africa as members of the Committee on Information.